The Claims:

Claims 1-28 (Cancelled)

29. (Currently Amended) A method of instant messaging between a plurality of messaging clients configured to transmit instant messages and presence data between each other, the presence data including a first known state in which a messaging client is receptive to communicating with other messaging clients, comprising:

receiving communications including presence data from each of the messaging clients at a presence server, the presence server determining the present state of the messaging clients using the presence data and storing information in a state table entry for each of the messaging clients indicating the present state of the messaging client;

for each of the messaging clients that is in the first known state, the presence server periodically transmitting to each of the messaging clients present state data regarding the other messaging clients stored in the state table entries;

if the presence server does not receive any communications from a messaging client during a predetermined period of time, then modifying the state table entry for the non-communicative messaging client to be an unknown state indicating that the presence server cannot determine the present state of the messaging client, and thereafter inhibiting further periodic transmissions of the present state data regarding the other messaging clients until the presence server observes the state of the messaging client by receiving presence data from the messaging client, without transmitting any presence information requests from the presence server to the messaging client, indicating that the messaging client has returned to the first known state.

30. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29, further comprising:

for each of the plurality of messaging clients, detecting a trigger signal indicating that the messaging client should be put into the unknown state.

31. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29, further comprising:

transmitting presence information directly from each of the plurality of messaging clients to the other messaging clients.

32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29, further comprising:

each of the plurality of messaging clients having a buddy list of other messaging clients with which the messaging client is interested in communicating with;

storing the buddy lists at the presence server;

for each of the messaging clients that is in the first known state, the presence server periodically transmitting to each of the messaging clients present state data regarding the other messaging clients on each messaging clients stored buddy list.

33. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29, further comprising:

transmitting instant messages between two of the messaging clients having presence information regarding one another.

34. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 33, wherein the messaging clients transmit instant messages between one another regardless of the presence state data stored at the presence server.

35. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29, further comprising:

detecting a communication from the messaging client at the presence server and in response thereto, transitioning the state table entry for the messaging client from the unknown state to a known state.

36. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35, wherein the known state is the first known state in which the messaging client is receptive to communicating with other messaging clients.

37. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 36, further comprising the step of detecting that the messaging client has transitioned from the unknown state to the first known state and in response thereto, transmitting presence information for the other messaging clients to the messaging client.

38. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29, further comprising the steps of:

as long as the messaging client is in the first known state, the presence server periodically transmitting presence information regarding the other messaging clients to the messaging client;

the presence server receiving an indication from a network that a periodic transmission of the presence information has not been successfully delivered to the messaging client; and

inhibiting the periodic transmission of presence information to the messaging client until the network indicates that the messaging client is once again able to receive transmissions.

39. (New) An instant messaging system, comprising:

a messaging server configured to transmit instant message data and presence data between a plurality of messaging clients, the presence data including no more than three instant messaging presence states;

the messaging server being further configured to determine a current instant messaging state of the messaging clients from the presence data and store information in a state table for each of the messaging clients indicating the present state of the messaging client, wherein the messaging clients have no more than three possible instant messaging states that may be recorded in the state table.

40. (New) The instant messaging system, wherein the instant messaging presence states include a first state that indicates that a messaging client has activated an instant messaging application.

41. (New) The instant messaging system of claim 40, wherein if the messaging server determines from the presence data that a messaging client is in the first state, then the messaging server periodically transmits present state data to the messaging client regarding one or more other messaging clients.

42. (New) The instant messaging system of claim 41, wherein the instant messaging presence states include a second state that indicates that the instant messaging application is not activated on the messaging client.

43. (New) The instant messaging system of claim 42, wherein the instant messaging presence states include a third state that indicates that it is unknown whether the instant messaging application is activated or not activated on the messaging client.

44. (New) The instant messaging system of claim 43, wherein if the messaging server does not receive any presence information from the messaging client for a predetermined time period while the messaging client is in the second state, then the messaging server storing information

in the state table to indicate that the messaging server is in the third state, without the messaging server transmitting any presence information requests to the messaging client.